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FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

FIRST POEMS & FRAGMENTS

BY

PHILIP HENRY SAVAGE

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1895

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TO GERTRUDE SAVAGE

A WINDING WATER ONWARD FLOWS,
AND WHITHER, ONLY OCEAN KNOWS;
HAPPY THE CRYSTAL SOURCE THAT LIES
REFLECTING IN ITS HEART THE SKIES.

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APOLOGY

BE more concrete, immediate to man!
So did he counsel me, the sage; and I,
Taking for naught the gentle guidances
Of nature, who in all my life before
Had lived unconscious, leaving much to her,
I cast her out; so I forgot the sky
And turned my eyes into the heart of man.
But poetry is a swift, unconscious growth,
Springs native where it may, and ever lives
The child of impulse unaware and wild;
And passion many times must rise and fall
And much of life be lived before the word
Spring up to utterance and demand a birth.
So was I barren many days and so
I doubted him, the sage and moralist;
Therefore at last I claimed again the days
When I was not so much and nature more,
When beauty rose, if beauty it were, and clothed
A happy impulse or a strong desire
In forms and colors native to the time.

SHORTER POEMS
I–XXVIII

I

'TIS grace to sing to nature, and to pray
The God of nature, out of His large heart,
To grant us knowledge of His human way;
This is the whole of nature and of art.

II

EVEN in the city, I
Am ever conscious of the sky;
A portion of its frame no less
Than in the open wilderness.
The stars are in my heart by night;
I sing beneath the opening light,
As envious of the bird; I live
Upon the pavement, yet I give
My soul to every growing tree
That in the narrow ways I see.
My heart is in the blade of grass
Within the courtyard where I pass;
And the small, half-discovered cloud
Compels me till I cry aloud.
I am the wind that beats the walls
And wanders trembling till it falls;
The snow, the summer rain am I,
In close communion with the sky.

III

WHEN I look on Ossipee
Not the hill alone I see;
Not the hill I see to-day
Fair and large and distant gray,
But a mountain richly bright,
Shining with eternal light.
Fashioned in a fearful past,
Born to be while life shall last,
Yet I fear thee not, but know
Thou shalt ever with me go.
I shall see thee, I shall find
The vision ever in the mind,
Given to me one happy hour
And received by me in power;
I shall never know the day
When thy touch has passed away;
For thy spirit, Ossipee,
Has become a part of me.

IV

UPON a pasture hill a pine-tree stands
And in the air holds up its slender hands;
A double sheep-track turns beneath the tree,
Dips to the firs, and seeks the meadow lands.

The sun is setting; slowly, one by one,
Faint breaths of wind along the branches run;
  The quiet of the hills is on the air
And on the earth beneath a quiet sun.

In contrast with the sky a gray stone wall
Is black beneath the orange light; and all
  The earth is black; never so black the earth
As underneath a sunset sky in fall.

The pine-tree's plumy branches make a net
And hold the light of heaven; and nearer yet,
  Cold in the unfeatured blackness of the ground,
Up-springs a ray from some hid rivulet,

Deep in the pasture hummocks at my feet;
I hear its icy ripple, low and sweet;
  No other sound; but in the air, unheard,
I hear the pulse of winter coldly beat.

V

WHAT know I of the fields of fall,
  The autumn days beyond the town?
I do not hear the harvest-call,
  I do not see the pastures brown;

The upland sloping to the down,
With corn-shocks leaning on the wall;
And golden ground-fruit shining through it all.

They tell me of the violet
Upon the hill, bare at the crest;
Of the autumnal primrose set
Deep where the banks protect it best;
Of summer fallow fields now drest
In green; of meadows deep and wet;
Ah! I have seen and I shall not forget!

Where stubble-fields give way to fern
In meadows where the water lies,
I've seen the sharp-flamed sumac burn
And flash its fires before my eyes.
Faint pictures of the river rise
With blowing mist beyond the turn;
Of lean November forests bare and stern.

I once have seen; and all the kind
Stood round me in that happy year;
In one bright impulse of the mind
I was the centre of the sphere;
The spring and summer centred here
On autumn; winter stood behind
And beckoned, whispering in the smoky wind.

VI

THE sea is silent round this rocky shore;
The forest wind
From the loud level beach behind
Brings rolling up the distant water's roar.

Silent the wheeling sea-gull in the air,
Without a cry;
Far off beneath the bending sky
A silent ship goes down the ocean stair.

The sea is blue, the sky is white with cloud,
The land is white;
The seaward rocks are shining bright,
Enwrapped in a white, salt, and icy shroud.

The weeds and bushes bare above the snow,
Against the sun
Hold up brave stems, and many a one
Has February bit of bud to show.

Where roses grew in one wild garden-close
I pulled away
A pair of rose-hips for to-day;
Memorial to the mistress of the rose.

VII

WHEN February sun shines cold
There comes a day when in the air
The wings of winter slow unfold
And show the golden summer there.

Dead ivy on the winter wall
Is glowing with an April light;
And all the wreckage of the fall
Above the snow comes into sight.

By a green rock beneath the pines
Are shadows blue along the snow.
Above the silent sun the lines
Of cloud in white procession go.

A bloom is on the forest tops
Of red light bursting through the brown.
The ice awakes, and silver drops
Come through the meadow stealing down.

The sky is hushed; beneath the trees
Where silentness and night have birth,
I heard the sunset whisper, Peace!
Peace, Peace! the gods are on the earth.

VIII

STILL, in the meadow by the brook I lay
And felt the April creep along my streams,
Subdue my currents to herself and play
At hide-and-seek with winter in my dreams.

Rich in the summer day the time is rife
With all an eager fancy will contrive;
But April welcomes each new shock of life
The sluggard winter from the heart to drive.

Thus did I tremble at the passing bird,
Leaped in the sun and with the breezes ran,
My heart a brook, and all my life a word
To tell how near to nature is a man.

IX

IN the first pale flush of even
When the sun is hardly down,
Ere the stars are in the heaven,
Ere the shadows turn to brown;

When the eastern sky is darkened
And the zenith still is blue,

I have stood and dimly hearkened
To the falling of the dew.

I have stood within the hollow
By low, rolling hummocks made,
Close beside a sloping fallow
In the bottom of a glade,

While the west was slowly dying;
And the dark east followed fast,
Swarming over, swiftly flying
Till the world was overcast,

Downward, past the dim horizon
Till the valley filled with night,
And the cool earth-whisper rising,
Filled me with a wild delight!

Let the day go by to even.
Hark! the distant vespers' toll.
When the sun is set in heaven
It is sunrise in the soul.

X

WHEN evening comes and shadows gray
Steal out across the glimmering bay
And tremble in the air between;

When evening comes and shadows green
Are shaken down across the moor
From willow-trees along the shore;

When evening stoops across the hill
Towards the sunset glowing still
And fills the hollow glens with shade;

When evening gathers in the glade;
And all the little beasts now run
That erst were hidden from the sun;

Then do I hear the footsteps fall
That bitter day hears not at all;
Then is the sunset like a door
That leads me on to more and more,
Till in the quietness of night
I find a freedom and a light
Eternal such as nowhere glows
From any sun that ever rose.

XI

WITH all the soul within me and suppressed
Before the sunset, heard I, and confessed,
A breath of God from out the whispered hand
Held o'er the lips of the great speaking west.

Heard it, and all the soul within me burned!
Heard it, and wondered at the secret learned;
And all the busy accidents of life
O'erwhelmed it then; it never has returned.

Thus once the doors of heaven wide open stand;
The voice is heard, of promise or command;
Is seen the gleam; and then the portals close
And nature grows again upon the land.

XII

I LOVE to walk against the yellow light,
The lemon-yellow of the first daylight,
When cold and clear above the frozen earth
The white sun rises far down to the right.

And then to think of life is very sweet;
The shackles fall and drop about one's feet;
Till in the clear forgetfulness of morn
It seems the world and life are all complete.

'T is good to be forgotten and forget;
To look upon the sun and so beget
A golden present, and a past that 's free,
A little time, of memory and regret.

And when one strikes and stumbles on a stone,
And turns to find the wingèd fancies flown —
Yet through the passages of life that day
Will run a radiance other than its own.

XIII

THE flash of sunlight from a bit of glass
Has often power to stop me as I pass;
And when I turn into the burning west
I fling me down upon the sunny grass,

Silent. I tell not all the little things
That fly to me and give my spirit wings;
The black-eyed bird, the cloud, the silver leaf,
The valley wind that passes as it sings.

And when the sun descending from the height,
Seeks in the sunken west the bath of night,
Wrapped in the darkling mantle of the sky
I wander forth and seek a new delight.

XIV

THE influences of air and sky
Are side lights from the eternal throne
That fall upon the watchful eye
Of him who silent waits, alone,
And crown him master of his own.
He knows the beauty of the rose;
The central sun, the farthest star he knows.

The balance of a blade of grass,
The winds that in the meadows run,
Gathering incense as they pass
To offer to the thronèd sun;
The trembling secret to be won
From every running stream; all these
Are his, yet force him, silent, to his knees.

The watcher shall possess the earth
In silence, leaping to control
In moments mighty with the birth
Of passion, when the eternal soul
Shall wholly bind him to the whole.
The air, the sky, the winds, the rose,
Are his; the earth, and God Himself he knows.

To H. F. L.

XV

A LARK flew by upon the air
And struck a red leaf from the tree,
There where he lighted; and a pair
Of robins bore him company.
And I, I looked across the lea,
Across the autumn uplands bare,
Then turned again and saw him sitting there.

Thy life is mine, thou meadow-lark;
Within thy golden breast I feel
My own heart beating, and I hark
And hear thy voice upon me steal,
Winning my own; and past repeal
I give myself to thee and mark
These few words here upon this maple's bark:

That "I am Thou and Thou art I;"
Cutting it deep that it may show
To future years; and, by and by,
When, as the tree shall lofty grow,
The woodman comes to lay it low,
This word shall stand before his eye,
That "I am Thou," writ clear, "and Thou art I."

XVI

THIS is thy brother, this poor silver fish,
Close to the surface, dying in his dish;
Thy flesh, thy beating heart, thy very life;
All this, I say, art thou, against thy wish.

Thou mayst not turn away, thou shalt allow
The truth, nor shalt thou dare to question how:
There is but one great heart in nature beating,
And this is thy heart, this, I say, art thou.

In all thy power and all thy pettiness,
With this and that poor selfish purpose, this
And that high-climbing fancy, and a heart
Caught into heaven or cast in the abyss,

Thou art the same with all the little earth,
A little part; and sympathy of birth
Shall tell thee, and thine openness of soul,
What fear is death and what a life is worth.

XVII

FAR in the south the redwings hear and speed
To answer nature's far-heard northern cry;
Swift from the fields they gather and take on
The burden of a journey; young and old
Swing upward to the sun as if the need
Of earth and of her comfort were gone by.
And guided by the star of memory run
Upon the trembling air; if, losing hold,
With weary wing one settle to the land;
If, sideways glancing from the flight, one see
A fairer light than hope, or faltering
Another answer to the white command
Hurled upward from the gun: yet joyfully
The happy flight speeds onward with the spring.

XVIII

THOU little god within the brook
That dwellest, friend of man,
I oft have heard the simple prayer
Thou tellest unto Pan:

That he who comes with rod and line
And robs thy life to-day,
May yet by the great god be taught
To come some other way.

XIX

WHERE man has conquered nature dies;
We snift some slender-growing pine
From out her own familiar skies

Where under forests fall and rise,
To pots and gardens, then repine
That where man conquers nature dies.

The atmosphere that round her lies
Bears not the light that used to shine
From out her own familiar skies,

She is a stranger. So our eyes
Run o'er the world and seek a sign!
If where man conquers nature dies

What is our earthly paradise?
Will nature there withhold the wine
That from her own familiar skies

She used to pour? Do we devise
A garden earth and say, in fine,
Where man has conquered nature dies
From out her own familiar skies?

XX

THE breath of slowly-moving spring
Stirs the light leaf, the doubtful wing,
And tempers each created thing.

The tumult of the summer's life
Surrounds the earth and, rich and rife,
Finds outlet in a world of strife.

The autumn season stills the plain,
Quiets the river, sifts the grain,
And looks to rest and sleep again.

In winter does great nature rest
Or die, dismissing every guest
And closing up the broad earth's breast.

XXI

"SOMETHING in the sense of morning
Lifts the heart up to the sun."
In our youth we may be pagan,
God is many, and the One
Great Supreme will wait till evening
When our little day is done:
Something in the sense of morning
Lifts the heart up to the sun!

XXII

THE road ran sloping through the trees
Below the dusty hill;
The sun, swept inward by the breeze,
Lightened the running rill.

Maples and chestnuts stood along
And autumn, at the prime,
Strewed nuts and leafage that belong
To this September time.

One tree was green beside the way,
A small white pine, I thought;
And there a broken branch and gray
Within a fork had caught.

It showed unlovely on the tree
As dark and dead it lay;
"And in my spleen I smiled" to see
That symbol of decay.

But my companion did not show
Such sympathy as mine!
He mounted up the tree, to throw
Its burden from the pine.

I cried, "Why will you not believe
That nature's ways suffice
To nature's purposes and leave
Her to her own device?

"She knows her purpose for the pine
And does not need the aid
Of wisdom such as yours and mine
In plans which she has made."

He cast it down and answered, "Why,
Ev'n as I am a man,
In doing this, believe me, I
Am part of nature's plan!"

I smiled again but not in joy,
In fear; for where it lay,
The branches covered, to destroy,
A purple aster spray!

My friend was pleased; not he divined
That though he was a man,
To be content we must be blind;
For *such* is nature's plan.

XXIII

I STOOD at the hedge as a hearse went by
And passed me along the way;
The sun broke in through a silver sky
And scattered a golden ray.

Should I offer a prayer for the passing dead,
For the hearts going burdened by;
With a human pity, a catholic dread
Of the tear, the sorrow, and sigh?

I too knew grief and the burdened heart,
Some knowledge of pain was mine;
Should I bow my head for another's smart,
Should I make this simple sign?

So I wondered and thought as the hearse went by
With its poor dead corpse within;
But I turned aside to the opening sky—
"Such a feeling may once have been,

"But now"—for the impulse was gone, you see,
And death was no longer new;
"Like a fallen leaf from an autumn tree
He is dead; what is else to do?"

And there on the path as I turned around,
By the side of a thorn-tree root
An earthworm lay, crushed into the ground
By the heel of a passing boot.

Well, death and death; 't is an equal term
For the worm and the man to-day;
But I turned and buried the angle-worm
In a neighboring lump of clay.

XXIV

THE scream of the tern in the roar of the waters
Will sound when the tumult of nature is o'er;
When the garden of earth is a home for the daughters
Of Eve, and when Pan is remembered no more.

White-winged, he appears! Dark, erratic, uneven,
A figure on earth of the stars in the sky;
Of high disarray and disorder in heaven,
Where the Galaxy strikes with dismay on the eye!

Where freak and caprice build a wild conflagration,
  Where Chaos is king over torrents of stars;
Who scatters the earth in a blind indignation,
  And systems are sped in interminate wars.

Then the children of Pan in that day will come singing,
  In fierceness, of him who has set in the spheres
Dismay; and along the salt sea-limits ringing,
  The scream of the tern striking wild on their ears.

XXV

LIKE a dead leaf that rolls along the ground,
Driven by a wind that wanders round and round,
  I see my heart, with edges cut and curled,
Like a dead leaf that 's driven without a sound.

Green faded into red, and red to brown;
Life to decay, and death the latest crown!
  So is my life, and lacks the heart of power
Here to lift up the god that 's fallen down.

Alas! why, in the days of mighty Jah,
Did I pull down thy pillars, Asherah?
  Baäl, where art thou? Egypt, even thou
Hadst faith for me beneath the wings of Ptah!

XXVI

ADAM arose at the word of God,
Up-borne on the bosom of all the earth;
Brother of trees and the black, prone sod;
The same in death and the same in birth.

Is it divine, the mystery?
Is the whisper true of the hidden word
That sounds for some in hill and sea,
In the lapse of life when the deeps are heard?

The sunlight lifts in the soul of man
The white-light torch of another dawn;
And love will finger a mystic span,
When the chords are drawn.

XXVII

IN long, slow silences of soul
Beneath the sunset on the sea
I think I hear the numbers roll
That tell my conquest over thee;

When thou art gentle and serene,
Thyself, forgotten all thy pride;

And I, myself as I have been,
A hero with his sword untried,

Able for mastery; and the game
Is offered and the action up;
And to my purpose true I claim
A hot draught from the stirrup-cup,

Then entertain thee. All my soul
Awakes upon the sunset sea
When high and clear the numbers roll
That tell my conquest over thee.

XXVIII

IF ever I have thought or said
In all the seasons of the past
One word at which thy heart has bled
Believe me, it will be the last.

The tides of life are deep and wide,
The currents swift to bear apart
E'en kindred ships; but from thy side
I pray my sail may never start.

If, in the turning day and night
Of this our earth, our little year,

Thou shalt have lost me from thy sight
  Across the checkered spaces drear,

Thy words are uttered; and the mind
  Accustomed, cannot all forget;
While written in my heart I find
  An impulse that is deeper yet.

We love but never know the things,
  To value them, that nearest stand.
The heart that travels seaward brings
  The dearest treasure home to land.

To M. J. S.

LONGER POEMS
I–VII

I

A NEW ENGLAND MOUNTAIN

WESTMORELAND and the hills of Cumberland,
Though Alps may overpeer them, have a name
Unperishing while the earth still bears in man
The blossom of a high-aspiring mind;
For Wordsworth loved them. And the sacred poet
Helvetia lacks not, nor old-age Japan,
A poet whose song above the fields of tea,
Above the temples to the figured god
Ancient in beauty set against the ascent,
Rises supreme to where above them all
Uplifts a hollow summit white with snow
Pale Fuji-san, and there in music builds
A temple sheer in beauty to the sky!
No outland peaks I know; but were I born
Among the lakes, or in the fields of Kai
No other were the song's essential heart
Upon the mountains that I then should sing;
For once I saw a summit not so bright
As these are fabled, mounting to the sky
In scar and ice-cliff loftily supreme,
But such a mountain as New England knows;
And never since in moments when the press

Of life has lifted has the mountain's touch —
Joy, merely joy and beauty, that is all,
And passionate love and depth and mystery —
Left me! and thus I sing a native song,
Content to be a brother to Japan,
Cousin to Switzerland, believing true
That ere he wanders by Castalian springs
The poet first must drink the wells of home.

II

NEAR THE WHITE LEDGE, SANDWICH, N. H.

I FOLLOWED up a little burn,
Led onward by the smell of fern;
And standing at the opening day
Where yellow blossoms line the way
I catch, blown faintly on the air,
The whispered perfume of the rare,
Pale *morning*-primrose, wet and fair!
The bobolink stands on the grass
Now ere the deep July shall pass
And greets me from the bennets tall;
I hear a distant thrush's call
Rise full and deep, then silent fall.

Spirit of Wordsworth, with me still
Upon the plain, upon the hill,
I find my purpose wholly bent
To be to-day thine instrument;
Led upward to the thought of thee
By all the spreading world I see.
The broad lake country at my feet
Bids Asquam with Wynander greet,
Rydal with Ossipee; and shows
The Bearcamp water where it flows
Another Rotha, stream and break,
From covert pond to glittering lake;
While Grasmere lies serene and still
By yonder tarn beneath Red Hill.
Thy mountains, Wordsworth, too, are by
And paint their shadows on the sky.
Chocorua stands, but not alone,
For out across the scene is thrown
The memory of Helvellyn; hid
Within thy folds, Tripyramid,
Are thoughts of Kirkstone, Fairfield, all
That heard Joanna's laughing call!
Whiteface is vanished in the shade
By Scawfell and Blencathra made;
While Sandwich Mountain at the west,
In Glaramara's shadow dressed,
Leads the high path toward Campton ways

Across a steeper Dunmail Raise!
Lake, hill, and mountain, all are bright
With the first gift of morning light;
The sun is on them and the dew,
Shining far down and glittering through
The wide, white fields of mountain air
High o'er the valleys everywhere.
And Wordsworth, in the auxiliar flame
That trembles on them from thy name
They bear in all their company
Aloft, the living thought of thee.

The Quaker poet sang his song
And loved the world these scenes among;
A sober man, a song, I think
Not like the wanton bobolink!
It was an utterance sweet like those
Light raptures of the song-sparrows;
It ne'er attained the impetuous rush
And music of the full-voiced thrush;
Whose song, O Wordsworth, like to thine
In joy long-thought and measured fine,
Is priestly in the praise of Pan Divine.

III

"I LEFT THE CITY"

I LEFT the city to the north and walked
Against a southwest wind; the hurtling rain
Showered the empty streets in noisy gusts,
Swept little footsteps down across the walls,
And on the wind came tossing through the trees.
The gusty city was not long to leave,
And underneath the open heaven I found
Breath and a beating wind, a hurrying sky
Of gray cloud under white, a world of rain,
And one long roadway southward under it,
A causey on the marsh, where on the left
A broad reach of the tide lay full, with salt
Red grasses bounded. Swinging to the west
The long, dark wind came streaming, while the rain
Sloped with the wind and swept into my face;
And I rejoiced, exulted in my heart,
Taking a grim delight as I suppressed
Each motion that betrayed me to the rain,
And drew my mantle closer. Rank on rank
The rain came on; the landscape, wetted o'er,
Lay passive, bay and bogland, to the sky;
The wind beat hard, and I through a long hour
Had stood rejoicing in the unwonted storm,

When two small figures hurrying through the rain
Came down the pathway from the town; they laughed,
Two rascal boys set free from school and mother,
And laid small schemes for catching smaller fish,
Clambered across the roadway fence and followed
Through the salt grasses to the reedy shore;
I saw them standing, careful of their lines
And peering o'er the bankside, plotting deep
With one desire in earnest in their minds
And filling them; while I, the idler there,
Leaned on the rail to watch them and the bay,
Gave up the hope I harbored of the west
And sunset, for the hour was drawing near,
Content to take my pleasure in the rain.
The sky had darkened in the hour and drew
A cloak of gray cloud closer to the earth;
Sudden as half aware I watched the scene
A sense of saffron in the western sky
Grew over me; the heavens were lifted high
And broke before my eyes; along the west
Great masses of the storm swept to the north,
Went swarming eastward in the southern sky;
The evening earth grew black beneath the light
That broke through western clouds, that caught the rain
In brightness as it lay in shining pools,

And sprang from wet walls and from dripping roofs.
There midst the white light and the golden edges
Of happy clouds just opening to the earth,
Bluer than painted blue was ever painted,
I saw the sky and prayed — prayed? prayed to whom?
God, God! I cried, but what I meant I knew not.
This was the perfect beauty, this was joy
Supreme, redundant; ah! no longer men
Seek heaven in Beatrice; this was heaven displayed
To the broad, fertile earth and yet I prayed not.
'T was like a gray thought broken by the wind
Of promise and the sun's fulfilment; scattered
To north and south, with routed columns flying,
Majestic rain in grand procession moved
Across the saffron fading western sky,
Cloud upon massive cloud-shape trailing low
Over the sunset earth; while in my eyes
I caught the cool, white, crystal light of heaven
That glistens after rain, and that one grace
Supreme that God has granted pagan man,
The bright blue sky.

IV

THE SONG-SPARROW

AT rest upon some quiet limb
And singing to his pretty "marrow,"
Sweet-breasted friend of child and man,
I love the bright eyes and the tan,
Gray-mottled coat that suits the trim
And winsome singing-sparrow.

He seeks no dear and lofty ground;
His home is every ridge and furrow;
In the low alder bushes he 's
At home, and in the wayside trees;
Wherever man lives I have found
The nest of the song-sparrow,

Except among the chimney-tops
A-smoking where the streets are narrow;
Where man has banished living green
And scarce a blade of grass is seen
He rarely comes, he never stops,
The little rustic sparrow.

Where twigs are small and branches low
And scarce the name of woods can borrow,

He flits and sings the whole day long
And "Rivers run," is still his song,
"And flowers blossom, breezes blow,
And all for the song-sparrow!"

I meet him in the tufted field
Among the clover-tops and yarrow;
I hear him by the quiet brook,
And always with the open look
Of one who would not be concealed;
And then I meet the sparrow

When golden lights at evening run
Among the trees the copses thorough;
And there I catch his joyous song,
Stealing the moments that belong
To songsters of the setting sun
And not to the song-sparrow.

When touches of the coming night
Set free the bands of hidden sorrow
The night-bird sounds his ringing note,
And from his melancholy throat
The hermit pours a sad delight,
And no one hears the sparrow.

His song is tuned for his to-day,
With hope and promise for the morrow;

More lofty notes are upward sent,
But none more simple and content,
None cheerfuller in work and play
Than that of the song-sparrow.

V

IN CHERRY LANE

A LITTLE maiden, in her hand
A pitcher, on her head a band
Of yellow cloth; her neck was bare,
The kerchief fluttered in the air;
The loose-stuff gown all straitly hung
And as she went about her clung;
Her bosom showed beneath the dress
Young and unconscious, and a tress
Now here, now there, crept out beneath
The band, as from the opening sheath
The tasselled spring; a slender maid,
She walked in childhood unafraid.

That such a slip of womanhood
Should blossom in a lane so rude,
That one in that low, sodden place
Should smile with such a winning grace

A marvel is unto the last!
I seemed to see, even as she passed
The summer following on the spring;
Hot, fetid days that ever bring
The noisome vapors up about
The meadow blossom in a rout;
Till in the passing of the days
The stem was bent, the shining face
Stooped down and met the marshy soil
And soon was gone. But in my heart
Even at the fancy I recoil;
I will not give her such a part.
Her eye was bright, her step was free,
And as I looked I seemed to see
The quick blood flow, the softer skin
Below the throat, beneath the chin,
The quick, young beating of the heart,
And on her face the blushes start!
Even as she came so let her go,
Whither or whence I cannot know.
I only know if in that lane
I ever chance to pass again,
The memory of that maiden fair
Will lend a fragrance to the air
And make the place, not over sweet,
Not wholly evil to my feet.

VI

WOODSTOCK

THIS, Woodstock, is my gift; and if I give
So much as this of all thou gavest me,
Call me not selfish if I have forgot
Thy daily life.

THE STREAMS

OFT have my footsteps in the past been turned,
Woodstock, to seek in solitude the life
That flows within thy brotherhood of streams;
In Moosilauke the slender, in the blue
Pemigewasset, and the silver East.
Now once again — and in what other scenes! —
Thy voices come to me, thy life, across
The silver indistinctness of a year;
And first, O Moosilauke, I turn to thee,
Born of the mighty mountain and its caves
Dark, and its forests and its long ravines.
A multitude of slender waters run
From off the sloping hills, from beds of moss
Beneath a hundred oaks, from little stones
Tumbled along before thy April strength,

Now lying quiet, making thee a bed;
From sandy sources in the tufted fields
Where cattle browse, and from a thousand springs
Where I was never led thy waters come,
Thy blue and silver slender stream. The sky
Bends over thee more closely, and there falls
A richer gift of azure through the trees
Upon thy waters, making thee a brook
Of blue and silver, Moosilauke; and thou,
Fulfilled of beauty in thyself and round
Encompassed all about with loveliness,
Art richer than thy brothers in the gift
Of quietness and tender solitude;
Friend of the green upon thy banks, thou 'rt loved
More dearly by the white and purple flowers,
More dearly loved if loving be the act
Of neighborhood and presence; and as I
Do love the neighborhood of green and blue,
The forest and the sky; the silver love
That glistens in the stream, and that low light
That passes from the faces of the flowers;
So by this promise and confession I
Do love thee, Moosilauke.
And thee I love,
Pure in thy beauty, perfect in thy strength,
Pemigewasset, lying in thy source
Beneath the brow of the great Profile! Far

Above thee is the stern, sad Mountain King,
Him with the mighty message that no man
Can wholly hear: the sternness and the sadness
Of nature conscious of herself, or man
Conscious of nature, ignorant of God.
This is the burden of that noble brow;
And thou to me didst give along thy way
Suggestions of this message till below,
Surrounded by the world, thou dost forget
Thy birth and I with thee forgot. One day
I wandered from thy course beside a run
Of darker waters; turning from the track
Of wheels and from the multitude of men
Along thy fertile way, to seek thy stream,
Thou dark-veined Bogan, tributary brook.
Thy waters run and bear a deeper song
Soft on the moss, and in my heart I love
The memory of that hour wherein I stayed
My life a little while with thee; my heart
Was opened to thee in a deep unrest,
And to the motion of thy currents all
My thoughts ran freely; 't was a joy to hear,
'T was rest and satisfaction to behold
Thy voice and colors and thy forms; I took
A comfort in thy presence, tuned to hear
A voice in thee repeated from my own
And yet not wholly mine; but more, to live

And run harmonious with my hand in thine,
And in the gentle beating of thy life
Find my own poise and balance; wrapt about
As in a mist of music and led on
To live and feel as prodigal as thou,
Careless of all degrees.

And now with strength and joy I turn to thee
Thundering in thy caverns, noble East,
Born of the midmost of the mountains, child
More truly than the Saco of the heart
And spirit of the hills. The powers prevail
Through all the mountains that shall give thee life;
Thy birth is now upon a thousand peaks
And has been and shall be; thou art a giant,
Impatient of the earth that holds thee, wild!
And thus thy voice is stranger to me, thus
It sounds a note I cannot always hear,
Not in all moods; but sometimes, low at first,
Above the unsensed tumult of the world
I hear the rushing of thy waters, catch
The silver flash of sunlight from thy rocks,
Then in my heart feel thy great spirit moving.
Thou art the friend, not of the earth — the rocks
Surround thee and control thy dreadful course —
But of the mountain winds; the winds pass o'er thee
And catch thy motion and thy eager voice;

Thus tempered they pass onward and below
They whisper to the listening ear of man.
Or in thy solitudes perchance he hears
A choral voice, thy music and the wind,
Joined always, breathing to the same intent,
A brother voice, an echo of his own.
There if he listen, down below the sound
He hears the voice articulate of life
Made manifest his own; he hears *his* voice
Dim-speaking to him through the gulf of change;
Another form, a myriad others, but
Ever his own beseeching to be heard
In sympathy. Wise in my purpose I,
Nor I alone give, noble East, to thee
My hand; for thou art brother to the wind,
And savage as thou art, child of the peaks,
Clad white in rocks and thine own silver form,
Thou dost not find thy rest upon the earth
But goest dissatisfied unto the sea
Where thou again art wild.

To J. T. S.

THE HEDGEROW

THE sun is up, Great God, the sun is up,
High o'er the eastern hill among white clouds
Insufferable! I thank Thee for the call.
Deep in the Woodstock meadows on a morn
Pleasant it is to wander ere the sun
Has burned the dewdrops off the bending grass;
When each small area seems a world complete,
When every forest stem beneath the sun
Shoots out a light, and every meadow span
Is dowered with moving radiance; and the hills!
I had not known their power till I had seen,
Limned by the early morn, their mystic heads
White in the eastern circuit. From the town
The path led out across the dew-wet lands,
Crossed the cold river in the river-mist,
And turned aside before the columned elms,
Heavy with morning light; three things remain
In joy, of all the pleasant things I saw
Along this early path: the glowing elms,
Far off, the line of hills, and suddenly
(That rose abrupt and claimed its character)
A straight and tangled row of heavy green,
A hedge, till then unguessed, where loftier trees
Stood up amid a world of clustering things,
Brambles and slender vines and, stiffly held,

The heads of little, sturdy, hopeful trees.
Along one maple branch some colder wisp
Of passing wind had struck an early blow
And pressed the green life back; the kindlier airs
Had after gathered round and now caressed
The broken hope into a golden death.
This was a passing fancy, but the elms
Are living elms and must forever live,
Rich in the willing burden of that morn;
I never see beneath the golden mist
Of peaceful afternoon, or in the time
Of open daylight such an upland slope
Without the gentle coming of this one,
This morning picture and the further thought
Of all the hidden chambers whence are drawn
The veils, lights, shadows, colors of the world
That spread across the poorest piece of ground
To form and to transform; then at the last
I saw the tangled hedgerow by the wall,
My mind woke to a fancy and at once
I found it wandering over English fields
And lodging with the primrose and the lark;
For here there was a hedge! The pioneer
Had built his roadside wall of labored stone,
And through his fields had led this simple line
Rough-set of rounded rock, to part his herd
Of cattle and his flock (perhaps) of sheep,

What time they browsed in Woodstock. Early grass
Had pushed a carpet in among the stones
And here the scythe had stopped; chance-drifted dust,
Holding the promise and the hope of life,
Seeds, the small looms of nature's garment, here
Found an-untroubled resting-place and ran
Through all their changes. Years passed by and here
The squirrel found a harbor and a home;
For overhead the angled beechnut hung,
And hazels stood at hand. Here in the spring
The gold of summer's sunrise — dandelions —
And daisies, starry oxeyes, clustered near;
The earlier violets were not absent nor
In later days the modest, showy bell,
Blue, slender-hanging. So the summers passed,
Rising and falling; as his homestead grew
The farmer mowed more widely, nor his flocks
Demanded less his care in fold and field
To bound; and so as ever each day more
He saw the need for labor, this one wall,
Now old and overgrown, he eyed with pleasure;
The stones might fall away, the flooding rains
That drove the stream up on the meadow-lands
Might roll and still displace them, and the vines,

The wild grape and the bramble, force their way
Disintegrating, still no care was his;
For over all the green was gathered close
And densely massed, so that no glimpse beyond
Greeted the searching eye; and here I found
The hedgerow standing as the sun had shaped it,
Richly confused and prodigal and wild,
And yet a straight, well-guided hedge and serving
Its master better than he served himself,
Adding to service beauty and a soul.

SOLITUDE

I KNOW a little patch of mountain ground
Low-settled by itself; and Moosilauke
Stands boldly in the west but never sees
Its little group of buildings and the elm
Close by the door. And farther in the north,
Bearing his sun-scarred summit proudly forth,
Stands noble Lafayette; he looks abroad
Across the sunny hamlet where the meadows
Shine with a softer green, yet scarcely knows
This low gray dwelling and beside the door
Its ancient elm-tree; yet do Lafayette
And Moosilauke the mountain and the deep,
Aspiring hills feel through their silent hearts

The birth and progress, Woodstock, of thy streams,
Born of the mossy mountains and the rocks
And running through the hills; and they in turn
Do visit and confirm the house in joy.
Gray with the touch of nature, friend familiar
Of forests and their mosses, with its roofs
Long-sloping to the west, I see it stand,
With gables not uncopied from the hills,
The mountain house, the home of quietness.
The village knew it not; beyond the hill
It was itself a hamlet; here there stood
Its tributary fields and pastures, here
A crystal source of water and a world
Of timber, and its flocks were on the hills.
There lay the little graveyard in the pines,
And these with larches and small maples made
A decent graveyard shadow; and I see
One queer, untutored apple that has placed
His foot beyond the pale, dropping his fruit
On the most ancient grave; all round about
Are golden meadows quiet in the sun,
With ombrel elm-trees dotting out the green.

This is the gate to Solitude; one day
I crossed the yard to where an old man sat
And questioned him, although I knew him not,
Brought here among the sources of the hills

Close to the thought of small simplicity.
I asked him, "Where is Solitude?" He rose,
And pointing with his cane across the ridge
Described a course that drew my heart in joy;
"Beyond the sheepfold follow the small lane
Across the first low ridge; the cattle there
Are mine and mine the pasture to the wood;
The lane will enter through the trees and lead
A mile or more over and up the slope,
There where you see the pines; let down the bars
At the upper end and that is Solitude."
I never started out on any course
With half the joy I felt for Solitude!
Rocks in the pasture lay, oases bare
In deserts of green grass! I moved among
The beasts and stood beside them where they drank
The stony pasture stream, where little grass
Crept thickly down the bank beside the shallows.
I wet my lips; 't is like a sacrament
To touch wild water where the cattle drink;
And more, I guessed it came from Solitude.
Then at the entrance of the trees I stood,
Ground the hard earth beneath my foot, and sent
A proud glance northward; he who thus can stand
On Moosilauke and look on Lafayette
Is master of the western hills; below,
Beyond the trees and pasture lay the valley

Voiceless and crowded by the mountains round
In multitude so great I turned and fled
Up the long, turning footway of the lane.
Ah, silence in the forest! I have learned
More from the hush of forests than from speech
Of many teachers, more of joy at least,
And that quick sympathy where joy has birth;
A thousand times called outward from myself
By life at every point, ten thousand things
Speaking at once in tones so sharp and sweet
Their voice was pain, but pain as life is pain
Beneath the over-chorus of the sky;
In silence finding joy to know myself
Deep in the heart of nature and the world.
As one advances up the slow ascent
Along the pathway in the woods the trees
Change aspect, nor alone in this but change
In stature and in power till Solitude
Seems cut out of the ancient forest. Here
Was Solitude! where man had lived of old,
Loved, serving God, and built himself a home.
Man smooths an acre on the rolling earth,
Turns up the mould and reaps the gifts of God;
Plucks down the apple from the tree, the tree
From empire in the forest, builds a home;
Turns for a bout among his brothers, wins
A sister to his wife and gets an heir;

And then as here in Solitude departs
And leaves small mark behind. The place is rare
In this high epic of the human life.
Where wildness has been wilderness shall be,
But give God time; and life is but a span,
Nine inches, while before it and behind
Stretches the garden of the cosmic gods;
For after London, England shall be wild
And none can thaw the iceberg at the pole.
In Solitude one sees the winding trace
Of what has been a road, a block of stone
Footworn, that lies along the dim pathway
Before one old foundation; and the rest
Is freaks of grass among the rising growth
Of birch and maple that another year
Shall see almost a forest.

VII

PUTATIS LUCUM LIGNA

YE seem intent to stand alone
Monarchs, ye men, of stock and stone;
The forest dead and everywhere
Untenanted the fields of air.
To view a wood unwilling, ye

Who for the timber hate the tree!
Will ye cast nature from her throne
And waste the earth you call your own?
Descending from the Lincoln hills
I came where join the Woodstock rills;
Across the east a smoky veil
Lets not, or day or night, to trail
Words dire in meaning, seen before
By Dante on the infernal door!
For pant of engines on the air
Shatters the mountain silence where
Five-throated, bound with iron bands,
The havoc of the forest stands!

Where man has conquered nature dies
From out her own familiar skies,
  And nature loves her child;
'T is nature loves the running brooks,
Not man but nature guards the nooks
  From which they are beguiled.
Infinite labor gives them birth,
The rocks, the deeps below the earth,
And dusky shadows bring them forth
  As weak as they are wild.
The earth will, all in little room
Become a garden, then a tomb;
  Then keep it while ye may

A little wild, where we may see
The unthreatened glory of a tree,
  And feel the fountain's spray.
Reserve one spot where we may find
An untamed accent in the wind;
And beds of moss unbroken, where
To mark the footprint of the bear;
One stream of water mountain-pure
Wherein the wild trout may endure
And the wild deer may drink and bathe secure!

SONNETS
I - XVI

I

THE flood of life that turned away
In search of rarer things, the rose,
The fragile flower that bursting blows,
And as it blows turns to decay,
Once more seeks rest along the way
Of earlier days and finds repose
In love of each green thing that grows,
A bunch of grass, an alder spray.
You common things I hold you dear
And beg the comfort you can give;
The faith that bears you through the year,
The courage both to die and live;
Believing that I too shall hear
The mountains fall, and shall not grieve.

II

TEN thousand fancies flitting through the mind,
An impulse here, a half-created thought
Are, in the stress of fancied duty, taught
To bow and pass and leave no trace behind.
Or carelessness, destructive as the wind,
More prodigal than nature, valuing not
The store of life that pain and joy have wrought
Laughs and forgets, blind leader of the blind!
We are but open caskets whence are fled
The choicest gifts God-given; while we retain
Indifference with a blustering hardihead,
And querulousness before a righteous pain;
Pale pietism, when virtue's self is dead,
With smug conceit impregnable and vain.

SONNETS

III

"MERCY! Justice! Ah, no! Heaven's gate!
· Heaven's gate!"
Panic above the crash of trampling horse
And rush of wings upright against the course,
A cry of gods confounded under fate!
In tumult deep and inarticulate
The angelic press burst outward, of the Source
Of bulk Omnipotence compelled by force —
Save Lucifer, omnipotent in hate.
Bright as the dying day, with one black cloud
Up-marshalled from the south and crossing o'er
The glory and blotting out the evening star,
So for a space he stood; then silent bowed,
And from the battlements outspringing far
Deep into darkness all his anguish bore.

IV

I LOVE the hills but she the open shore,
The shore because it lies along the sea.
I would be lofty, solitary, free,
Selfish at times; at times, hearing the roar
Of the ocean where beneath the bending oar
It does the planet service, I would be
As rich in blessing, yea, as rich as she
Is rich in blessing; I could not be more.
I walk apart, my heart is in the sky,
Yet ever yearning downward to the land;
She walks where all the world is crowding by
And holds a little child in either hand;
I bless her service with a troubled cry
Of one who would but cannot understand.

SONNETS

V

I CANNOT face the utterance of a prayer
In innocence; I know not by what gate
Egress it finds beyond the fields of air;
In what vain corridor my words may wait.
A mystic once, I did communicate
With my own self and thought with God to share
My hope and aspiration; but of late
My words, like Noah's dove, returning bare,
I feel the confines of my spirit's heaven.
Against the limits of myself in vain
They strike and bruise their wings and downward fall.
Then to myself, Peace! do I cry, and call
That sufferance peace which yet is perfect pain:
In courage, Peace! when there is no peace given.

VI

TO catch at that which never can be caught,
To yearn for what thou never shalt attain
(Nature's own motions moving in the brain)
This is thy life and thou by her art taught.
This is her gift; to thee if welcome not
With all its store of passion and of pain,
Thou hast the power to give it back again
And break the bow before thou triest the shot.
Nay rather let me live to fight the fight
And die the death, when driven against the wall,
That many a man has fairly fought and died.
Then shall I keep the spark she gave me bright
(Gigantic mirth, that gave it to deride!)
And cast it at the heavens even as I fall.

SONNETS

VII

A MONTH ago the cloud alone was fair.
None watched the leafless tree-tops, thin and dry,
Hold up their slender fans against the sky
Save here a poet and a dreamer there.
But now the sun through the soft, golden air
Requires an incense from the flowers that lie
Within a thousand vales; and low and high
The broad earth doth a pale green mantle wear.
Now voices are where all was still before;
By each green leaf there trembles a brown wing;
A thousand small lives wake beside my door
And each one turns to labor and to sing.
At last man feels the tumult of the spring
And looks upon the universe once more.

VIII

A THOUSAND flowerets of a thousand hues
Born of the sunset and the early dawn,
Burn in the darker forest and suffuse
An unimagined brightness o'er the lawn.
These are the days I give my heart in pawn
To thee, O nature, and the world refuse;
These are the days I feel my footsteps drawn
To seek the wayward motions of the muse!
I have not long enough on earth to stay
To lose the joy of one bright summer day;
One quiet day of peace, ah many a one!
Full of the song of birds and tremulous
With sunshine; let the world seek after us:
The muse and I are wandering with the sun.

SONNETS

IX

I STOOD long time and listened to the wind
That tossed the fallen foliage o'er and o'er;
Long time I stood; then turned within to bind
An evergreen upon the open door.
When winter comes to sweep across the floor
And freeze the panes perforce the huswife mind
Shuts-to the autumnal door and there reclined
Battens on books till summer comes once more.
I cannot stop her; turning to the shelves
Her idleness she feeds on other men;
Takes what she finds, complaining not and delves
In mines deep-sunken with the golden pen;
Then weary grows and longs to see again
The spirits of the sky, the woodland elves.

X

MOOSILAUKE IN DECEMBER

THE wet, brown leaves of winter on the ground
Unkempt they looked or evil, one by one
Called back to vision by a careless sun;
He should by this have reached his southern bound
Leaving December earth all straitly gowned
In decent white; but here we trod upon
Her bosom black, uncovered and undone,
And shrank from many a wet and naked wound.
The Parthian sun his arrows to the head
Drew, and within the field a little rill
Beneath an edge of morning ice awoke;
A line down through the mat-brown grass it led
White, threaded with the blue the heavens spill,
And tinkled coldly past a frozen oak.

Light veils of snow the west wind bore along,
White shadows, drifted through the upper air
Above the valley; they were very fair
And passed in music like a summer song.
I stood upon a mountain; here the strong
Wild-Ammonoosuc rolled in forests bare,
A tumult in his hollow pathway; there
Whispered through Wildwood with an icy tongue.
The sunlight shone on Kinsman through the cloud
And turned the little falling snow to gold
Which never reached the earth, but it went back
Into the chambers of the air; the loud,
White shepherd west wind drove into the fold
And forests waving showed his vanished track.

Standing above the Tunnel gorge, the brook
Unseen, unheard below I knew laid out
And trimmed its tenements for April's trout,
Rested and ran from hidden nook to nook.
The wintry forests in the wind had shook
December from their branches; round about,
The sun had aided in the season's rout
To Moosilauke; and when to him I look,
White snow and winter build in me a sense,
Structured on beauty awful and serene,
Of majesty, a pressing sense of fear.
I never saw a vision more intense
In awfulness than that tremendous scene —
Black Moosilauke, uprising dark and near!

So very near! Far down, the Tunnel run
Crept out beneath the mountain's heavy base;
Buttress and bastion mounting I could trace
In upright courses to the supreme One,
High, distant dome where-over bits of sun
Ran with the rolling clouds a windy race.
But all beneath was blackness, and my face
A breath as of the mountain fell upon.
A whisper from the mountain came across,
So dark, so strong! a breath in blackness drawn,
Long drawn and deep, so near we were and high!
And then it seemed a simple child might toss
Against the opposèd wall a pebble-stone,
Deep in the Tunnel gorge to roll and lie.

XI

THE poet stoops and plucks a little flower
To tell his greatness in a simple song;
He does not need through seasons to prolong
A mighty work to manifest his power;
Which still is simple, still the common dower
If unexpressed, of many in the throng
Unconscious who, with poetry along,
In life's sojourn spend many a happy hour.
So Burns delights us with a lowly lay,
The warm expression of a simple joy;
So Wordsworth, moving through each quiet day,
Forgets not the quick impulse of the boy;
And midst thy passion, Shelley, to destroy,
Thou'st found the truth along the lyric way.

XII

I HATE the vast array of "modern" things,
Gilt and pale purple, yellow, pink, and white;
Dull imitations and a thousand light
And weightless books of verse and copyings.
There are so many! Every season brings
A thousand fashions new and with delight
Proclaims them beautiful; till I take flight
And turn me to the masters and the kings.
And yet they will not let the masters be;
I find my Walton in a showy dress;
Find all the bright, old-age simplicity
Bedecked and botched; the years of good Queen Bess
Are made the dull philistine's property;
And Burns is "popularly" sent to press.

XIII

HIGH on a sunward-mounting precipice
Edged with a cloud that all before me ran,
I backward gazed and pictured, span by span,
How I had mounted upward from the abyss;
By what a confused pathway come to this,
The end of earth; and saw the future's plan
Grow, "minimize the universe to man,"
And build a daring, nobler edifice.
Ah, struggle to assume this new control
And seek thy higher reaches, O my soul!
Thou 'rt sure of this, thy feet are on the earth;
Forget it, it remains; but let thine eyes
Lead on thy heart, and find beyond the skies
At least the promise of an upward birth.

SONNETS

XIV

HONEY of woodland wild and of the hill,
The juices of the maple and the cane
And all the fulness of the fallen grain;
The pauses in the running of the rill,
Silence of distant meadows, voices far
Of unseen swallows in the upper air;
The beauty of the bending bough; the rare,
Soft rose, the sunbeam and the melting star —
What are they all but shadows in the night
To thee, where beauty burns a perfect light!
I see thee standing gracefuller than grass,
Nakea, with one foot in the lingering stream,
The sun upon thee, perfect! or alas,
Is it not thee, my dryad, but a dream!

XV

THE warm, moist kiss of April on the grass;
The stooping sun, the wet and fragrant plain;
The voice of life, low-whispered as I pass;
The vision of the summer through the rain;
A thousand thoughts borne outward from the mind
Laughing at nature, caught and held again
Close to the stirring heart, till like the grain
In autumn they are scattered by the wind!
And some may range along the open sky,
And some may fall and live and some may die.
I care not now whether the wanton air
Rid me of flying chaff or sift the seed
Of future promise; or if this, indeed,
My present fancy lead me anywhere!

SONNETS

XVI

I LAYED upon a rock beside the sea
A spray of eglantine where all about
The water rushed in torrents in and out
Among the wet, black rocks tempestuously.
To eastward high, a little promont'ry
Up-bore the billows on his iron breast;
And thence they rolled beyond him to the west
Surging about my eglantine and me.
And of the mightiest waves their spray that cast
White and imperious far into the air,
Not one but passed the sweet-briar safely by.
Till, midst the churning foam and surges there
That reached but could not clutch it, rising high
The tide itself did take it at the last.

FRAGMENTS
I-V

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I

IN the low-lying April afternoon
The earth was hushed within a mellow mist
Across the new brown meadows; the white sun
Was gathered in a knot of clouds and gave
No thought of an infinity beyond.
Each blade of grass was conscious of its shadow;
The sounds of birds and waters and the air
Were stilled within the silence where I sat
Beside, and as I sat I felt the least
Of nature's children that around me played,
And all was like a dream. I gathered up
A handful of the grass and then forgot it;
I felt a gentle rising of the wind
And heard a sparrow whisper close at hand,
With other little life beside me; but
The distance faded and the nearness grew
Confused to a fancy in the gray,
The desolate gray shadow of the earth,
Unreal and dimly dying from my thought
Till all was nothing save the sun and me.

II

WESTWARD I walked; the sun was low; the plain,
Seeming to rise before me, with the earth
Revolving, rolling backward to the east,
Shut out the dropping sun. I hastened on,
But still the day grew darker as the west
Drew in its last, white, fading fan of light,
And all the world was cold; and when the land
Ceased to reflect the sky, and heavy lay,
And dully, by itself, I came where spread
A darkling mirror, whitened half, and blue,
Still cherishing a faint thought of the sky.
The hour was calm, forgetful of the day,
Where toward the noon the pattering rain did beat
The fragrant earth; a soft green mist arose
And lay across the opening fields; and then,
Sweeping the huddled air around the world
The silver storm scowled black; o'er all the sky
It tore itself in fury and ran low
Across the shuddering earth; it seized the trees,
It seized the mountains in its gloomy hands
And shook them; while the terror stricken streams
Leaped madly on to aid the warring sea.
Then in the thronging blackness of the storm

I had rejoiced, as now I smiled to see
The fair, white, gentle surface of the lake
And feel the air fall softly; at my feet
The waters rose like coming thoughts that fall
Forgotten, and my mind rose till it ran
As smoothly as the yet unbroken wave.

III

THE wild-eyed, savage gull, with bow'd wing, tips
The white, flat surface of the misty sea;
Or, stooping in the wind-trod, hollow wave,
Reels upward straight, hangs quivering, his whole self
Intent, and breaks the surface like a bolt!
This spirit of the mystery of the sea
Sweeps by in silence on the noisy scud,
Or bursts across the borders of the storm,
A flash of horrid white; with beating wing
Struggles in futile, royal wrath against
The armed battalions of a mighty wind,
And beaten, leaps aloft upon the storm
To ride in fury down the conquering gale.
Away, thou symbol of my own gray thoughts!
Whenever from the heaven of weary hopes

The clouds run low in the palely flowing sky;
Whenever from the world of the unachieved
The mists mount up to meet the drooping cloud,
And I between them fail, 't is thou I see,
Thou dreadful emblem of my darker life!
Thou art no child of sunlight, for indeed,
Whether beneath some purple summer eve
Thou weariest thy way into the west,
Or in the winter on the frozen bay
Standest erect, a white, mad, ravened king,
Life-banished by the ice, thou art the same,
Grim, busy with thyself, hard, gloomy, wild.

IV

AT sunset in the college close the light
Falls like a benediction softly down;
Here is a moving stillness in the air,
Quiet, as though the now deserted east
Had laid its empty hand upon the lawns
And hushed the world; from out the glowing west
The sunlight settles on each tender leaf,
And entering in the gentle, empty cells
Calls through the hollow tubes; down to the earth
Trembles the peaceful summons; and the grass
Drinks in the sunset light, except where lie

Dark traceries of black upon the green,
Left mourning for the sun the while the tree
Laughs with its selfish seizure of the light!
This is the life of peace; but on the sky
The city in the distance casts a light
Brilliant and false, electric, publishing
Confusion and false day, nature betrayed,
And all the dark disguises of the town;
The frantic strivings after more, that choke
The holy fact of life, which single here
Sits at the heart and bids the rest be still.

V

WHEN the low sun descends on Hamlet hill
And this my maple throws a longer line
Of lengthening shadow down across the slope,
Then has a day departed, casting yet
A lingering light from sidelong slopes and hills
That run into the west. Much would I love
One passing day to live beneath my tree,
And there within its shadow on the earth
Move with the moving sun a mutual course.
First in the dawning is the crystal light
Scarce sprinkled o'er the hill, while all the heaven
Sheds seeming equal brightness on the world;

But after comes the round, revealing sun,
To mark his influence and define the earth,
Giving my tree its shadow on the ground.
And therein would I rest and through the day
Follow it lengthening downward past the noon;
See the light grasses and the browsèd tufts
Of pasture herbage tremble in the sun,
Pale upland asters, dusty goldenrod,
And all the autumn flowering of the fields;
Then feel them sink to quietness within
The slow advancing shadow. I should find
A joy in the light liftings of the leaves,
Breeze-shifted shadows trembling, little rays
Of unexpected light along the ground.
Then as the day advancèd to its fall
And this my maple's shadow crept along
Downward, I should forget the lesser life
Of grass blade and of sunny pebble-stone,
Feeling the great fact of the day's decline,
The coming of the hour when all the hill
Would cast its shadow; of the later night,
The shadow of the earth. Thus would I live,
And one day thus bid welcome and depart.

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